

## **Detroit-Columbia Central Office Building**

Address: 52 Selden

Local

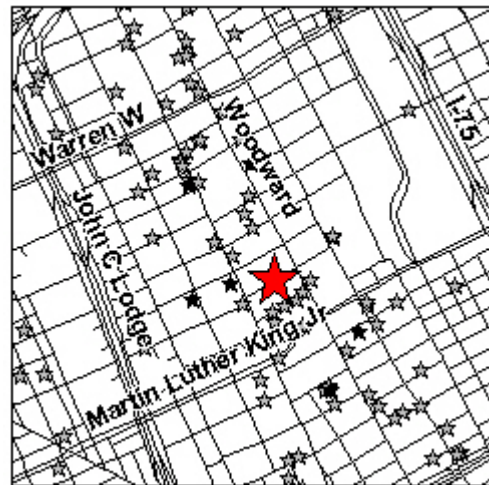
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Detroit-Columbia Office Building, 2003



### **Historic overview:**

The Detroit-Columbia Central Office Building, commissioned by the Michigan Bell Telephone Company in 1927, is designed in the Art Deco style. It was designed by one of Detroit's most prominent architectural and engineering firms, Smith, Hinchman and Grylls (SH&G). The firm has designed telephone office and exchange buildings in over seventy Michigan cities, beginning as early as 1904. SH&G was the leading architect in telephone building design for Michigan Bell, earning most of their commissions from the telephone company during the 1920s and 1940s. Today, SH&G is the third largest and the oldest continuous-practice architecture, engineering and planning firm in the United States, and maintains a business relationship with Michigan Bell.

The Detroit-Columbia Central Office Building, at a cost of \$1.2 million, incorporated the latest technology. The "dial system" office building originally served the seven thousand telephone users in the central Woodward Avenue district of the city. Prior to the dial system office, the area was served by lines from Glendale, Northway, Empire, and Melrose manual offices. The Detroit-Columbia Building was constructed to relieve those manual offices, however it did not replace their function. The above mentioned manual offices, and the Detroit-Columbia Office Building, are all named after streets in Detroit.

The Michigan Bell Telephone Company was created in 1881, and through a series of mergers and expansions, has also operated under the names of Michigan Telephone Company, Home Telephone Company, Ameritech Michigan, and SBC Ameritech. The Detroit-Columbia Central Office building is still owned and operated by SBC Ameritech.

